AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (**Currently Amended**) A genetically altered mouse comprising a defective genomic Caspase-9 gene, said defective genomic Caspase-9 gene resulting in a deficiency [[deficient]] in functional Caspase-9 expression in the mouse ~~due to a defective Caspase-9 gene~~, and said defective genomic Caspase-9 gene, when homozygous, resulting in ~~wherein a homozygous mutation in said defective Caspase-9 gene causes~~ reduced apoptosis in brain, spinal cord, dexamethasone-treated thymocytes, cardiac muscle, or smooth muscle, or reduced apoptosis associated with viral infection.

2. (**Canceled**)

3. (**Currently Amended**) A method of producing a genetically altered mouse comprising a defective genomic Caspase-9 gene, said defective genomic Caspase-9 gene resulting in a deficiency [[deficient]] in functional Caspase-9 expression in the mouse ~~due to a defective Caspase-9 gene~~, and said defective genomic Caspase-9 gene, when homozygous, resulting in ~~wherein a homozygous mutation in said defective Caspase-9 gene causes~~ reduced apoptosis in brain, spinal cord, dexamethasone-treated thymocytes, cardiac muscle, or smooth muscle, or reduced apoptosis associated with viral infection, the method comprising the steps of:

   a. providing an isolated DNA sequence comprising a genomic DNA sequence encoding a mouse Caspase-9 that is defective in that it does not contain the pentapeptide motif QACXG (SEQ ID NO: 7), wherein "X" is arginine or glycine;

   b. introducing said isolated DNA sequence into a mouse embryonic stem cell under conditions that cause the genomic DNA sequence to stably integrate, via homologous recombination, into a chromosome of said stem cell;

   c. incorporating said stem cell into a mouse blastocyst to produce a chimeric mouse;

   d. breeding said chimeric mouse to produce mice heterozygous for said genomic DNA sequence encoding said defective genomic Caspase-9 gene, thereby producing [[a]] the genetically altered mouse ~~defective in Caspase-9 expression~~.

4. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to claim 3, wherein said isolated DNA sequence additionally comprises a selectable marker gene.

5. (**Original**) The method according to claim 4, wherein said marker gene is a neo gene.

6-7. (**Canceled**)

8. (**Currently Amended**) The genetically altered mouse according to claim 1, wherein said mouse is heterozygous for the defective genomic Caspase-9 gene.

9. (**Currently Amended**) The genetically altered mouse according to claim 1, wherein said mouse is homozygous for the defective genomic Caspase-9 gene.

10. (**Previously Presented**) A genetically altered mouse comprising a defective genomic Caspase-9 gene, said defective genomic Caspase-9 gene comprising a DNA sequence encoding a Caspase-9 protein that does not contain the pentapeptide motif QACXG (SEQ ID NO: 7) and resulting in a deficiency [[deficient]] in functional Caspase-9 expression in the mouse, and said defective genomic Caspase-9 gene, when homozygous, resulting in ~~due to a defective Caspase-9 gene, wherein said defective Caspase-9 gene comprises a DNA sequence encoding a Caspase-9 protein that does not contain the pentapeptide motif QACXG (SEQ ID NO: 7), and wherein a homozygous mutation in said defective Caspase-9 gene causes~~ reduced apoptosis in brain, spinal cord, dexamethasone-treated thymocytes, cardiac muscle, or smooth muscle, or reduced apoptosis associated with viral infection.

11. (**Currently Amended**) The method of claim 3, further comprising:

    e. interbreeding said mice heterozygous for the genomic DNA sequence encoding the defective genomic Caspase-9 gene to produce homozygous mice deficient in functional Caspase-9 expression.

12. (**New**) The genetically altered mouse according to claim 10, wherein said mouse is heterozygous for the defective genomic Caspase-9 gene.

13. (**New**) The genetically altered mouse according to claim 10, wherein said mouse is homozygous for the defective genomic Caspase-9 gene.